

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**TRANSFORMING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY**

by

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ABSTRACT

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After nearly three full years in the continuing military campaign in Iraq Americans are showing signs of wavering support, and confidence in military news is waning. The common outcry among U.S. servicemen is, "we're not hearing any of the good news that is occurring in Iraq". Is DoD fully employing its portion of the nation's informational element of power to achieve its objectives? Does the DoD Strategic Communication strategy need to be revitalized in order to sustain public support of this mission?

This paper will examine DoD's Strategic Communication strategy to support the Global War on Terror objectives. It will review the ways and means that DoD employs to achieve its communication objectives, and evaluate emerging information technologies to enhance future strategic communication requirements. It will also make recommendations to transform current practices that will require reprioritizing resources in order to gain an advantage in the contemporary global information environment.

TRANSFORMING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) the Bush Administration identifies the need for a “different and more comprehensive approach to public information efforts that can help people around the world learn about and understand America.” It also advocates “using effective public diplomacy to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism.”¹ This infers the need for a National Communication Strategy emanating from the President’s administration, synchronized with communication strategies of all subordinate governmental organizations. The essence of strategic communication is to synchronize and coordinate public affairs, statesmanship, public diplomacy, and military information operations in concert with the actions of employing the national elements of power to achieve national objectives.

However, these ideas are not reflected in the subordinate strategies pertaining to the military. Within the Department of Defense (DoD); the 2005 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the 2005 National Military Strategy (NMS) are devoid of any mention of communication strategy or military support to public diplomacy.² As a result, the DoD has not achieved its full potential in supporting Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and the overall Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) through strategic communication because of the lack of recognition for this essential capability.

Even though this critical requirement was identified in the 2002 NSS, and is widely recognized in subsequent government studies and reports as a significant shortcoming in the department’s ability to achieve communication objectives – it remains an unfulfilled task.³ The 2001 Defense Science Board’s (DSB) report on Managed Information Dissemination and the 2004 Defense Science Board report on Strategic Communication both identify needed improvements in national and military communication efforts. Not until recently have specifications been spelled out for national and military strategic communication objectives for

ongoing operations as they are now in the National Strategy for the Global War on Terror. The war on terror and supporting military operations have suffered from the absence of strategic communication strategy and creative approaches to competing in the global information environment. This deficiency is noted by Secretary Rumsfeld in his recent comments to the Council on Foreign Relations, "Our enemies have skillfully adapted to fighting wars in today's media age, but for the most part we, our country, our government has not."⁴

New and emerging technologies for delivering information to various audiences are not fully embraced by the military public affairs community. Some of the newer technologies are being explored and exploited not only by commercial news organizations but by adversaries in the GWOT while military public affairs lag behind. Various creative and successful initiatives are being explored by small segments of military public affairs, but the community as a whole is slow to adopt and expand the use of these new technologies.

Understanding various audiences and how they perceive our messages is essential to succeeding in supporting military operations through communication efforts. The diversity and fragmentation of the audiences, as well as the media, make for a challenging environment to compete in. Some audiences may even shift sides depending on how a particular campaign affects their concerns. The world's media seem to be fixated on America's faults, and this makes the adversary's job easier by diverting attention from negative coverage of their actions to any error of the U.S. or the coalition.

The Defense Science Board Chairman wrote, "Effective strategic communication can prevent a crisis from developing and help diffuse a crisis after it has developed. To win in a global battle of ideas, a global strategy for communicating those ideas is essential."⁵ Many of the communication challenges we are experiencing during stability operations in Southwest Asia could be mitigated by better synchronizing the DoD communications strategy vertically and horizontally, and exploring new technology for reaching emerging audiences.

This paper will examine DoD's Strategic Communication strategy to support the Global War on Terror objectives. It will review the ways and means that DoD employs to achieve its communication objectives, and evaluate emerging information technologies to enhance future strategic communication requirements. It will also make recommendations to transform current practices that will require reprioritizing resources in order to gain an advantage in the contemporary global information environment.

In the summer of 2004, the Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked the Defense Science Board (DSB) to study strategic communications as part of a study on the Transition to and from Hostilities. The DSB task force on strategic communication developed seven recommendations to improve the US ability to communicate with and influence worldwide audiences. The sixth and seventh recommendations apply to the military and address the following:

Appoint the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy as the DoD focal point for strategic communication and serve as the Department's principal on the NSC's Strategic Communication Coordinating Committee.

The Task Force recommends that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff ensure that all military plans and operations have appropriate strategic communication components, ensure collaboration with the Department of State's diplomatic missions and with theater security cooperation plans; and extend U.S. STRATCOM's and U.S. SOCOM's Information Operations responsibilities to include DoD support for public diplomacy.

The Department should triple current resources (personnel and funding) available to combatant commanders for DoD support to public diplomacy and reallocate Information Operations funding within U.S. STRATCOM for expanded support for strategic communication programs.

The National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism is the first DoD plan since the release of the DSB report to address the requirement for strategic communication components.⁵ The DoD's "strategic communication objectives in the GWOT are to align Coalition and partner nations against violent extremism, provide support for moderate voices, dissuade enablers and supporters of extremists, deter and disrupt terrorist acts, and counter ideological support for terrorism."⁷ A sustained, proactive communication effort will be required to meet these objectives. The plan calls for combatant commanders to tie in all strategic

communications capabilities and synchronize them with interagency efforts to achieve synergistic communications effects. "An important change the government needs to make is to incorporate communications planning into every aspect of the war on terror," Rumsfeld said.⁸

In recent months the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) (ASD (PA)) established a position for a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Joint Communications) (DASD (JC)) to shape DoD-wide communication processes and manage the public affairs transformation program.⁹ The major duties of the DASD (JC) include responsibility for ensuring the communications environment is included in future plans horizontally across DoD as well as coordinating and synchronizing communication efforts in the interagency. This new function and associated developments will start DoD on the path to identify ways and means to fill communication gaps, coordinate and synchronize efforts, and establish a robust and credible communications capability.

The recently published 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), on the very last page, finally does address strategic communications and recognizes the need to "improve integration of this vital element of national power into strategies across the Federal Government."¹⁰ The DASD (JC) has been given the responsibility to coordinate DoD integration within the interagency community and lead the actions outlined in the recently approved spin-off of the QDR, the Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap.¹¹ The roadmap is intended to provide strategic direction, a plan of action, and milestones to close capability gaps identified during the QDR development process. In order to close the gaps DoD will organize, train, equip and resource key communication capabilities as described in the roadmap.

Now that strategic communication is being addressed in substantial reports and strategies, synchronization of communication and public diplomacy efforts across the services and among various elements of national power may be dramatically improved. Combatant commands are currently executing theater security cooperation plans without the benefit of synchronized effort with State Department communication objectives. Combatant Commands

are now tasked to include strategic communication annexes in crisis and contingency plans, security cooperation activities, and military support to public diplomacy.

Former director for Strategic Communications and Information on the National Security Council said, "All elements of the plan should be designated to help achieve political, economic, and military objectives for the region. Coordination mechanisms include elements of the combatant command staff (operations, intelligence, strategy and plans, public affairs, strategic communications, information operations, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs and the Staff Judge Advocate), U.S. Embassies (foreign policy, intelligence, State Department public diplomacy affairs, Defense Attachés, and regionally oriented USAID advisers) and to the extent possible, allied representatives."¹²

Ultimately, combatant commanders will be able to tie communication operations and efforts of military support to public diplomacy to an overarching strategic information plan and State Department efforts in public diplomacy.

Vertical and horizontal coordination and synchronization

The recent debate in the political arena and news editorials over the use of paid positive news stories in Iraqi newspapers is a good example of the need for synchronized communication strategies, plans, and policies. The Secretary of Defense and the President's reported concerns about the pay-to-print program led to controversial statements by each of them. Closely coordinated strategies, plans, and policies would improve understanding and expectations of procedures at every level and help avoid unnecessary public criticism.

Perception of wrongdoing can become reality for some people, as Los Angeles Times reporter Mark Mazetti illustrates in his criticism of the military in Iraq for abridging the principles of the 1st amendment to the U.S. Constitution which the military is sworn to defend. "The military's effort to disseminate propaganda in the Iraqi media is taking place even as U.S. officials are pledging to promote democratic principles, political transparency and freedom of speech in a country emerging from decades of dictatorship and corruption."¹³ Poorly coordinated information operations failed to account for second and third order effects of a seemingly harmless Psychological Operation initiative. These actions introduce the possibility that the clear distinction between public affairs and information operations will be blurred, and

potentially damage American credibility. The effort was intended to help promote goodwill between the Iraqis and the coalition. Instead, it provided opportunity to critics of military operations in Iraq, and ammunition to the insurgent's war of ideas. Secretary Rumsfeld's comments on this controversial issue led to criticism and questions of credibility recently when he told reporters that the pay-for-print program had been stopped, when in fact it had not.¹⁴

With better vertical and horizontal coordination, and an established strategic communication strategy, the DoD and its combatant commands will be empowered to develop more proactive shaping efforts, and avoid the communications impact of disjointed planning. The recent U.S. air strike in Pakistan that targeted bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahri, is a good example of poor interagency coordination. The initial reports of the bombing left both the Pakistani government and the U.S. military in the awkward position of having to explain actions for which neither had been informed nor prepared in advance to respond. Close coordination within the interagency community is imperative to plan and execute a coordinated information campaign that supports GWOT objectives.

Capability gaps

The DoD must reprioritize resources and accelerate implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap in order to close identified capability gaps and gain an advantage in the contemporary global information environment.

"Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have underscored that we must create a greater capacity to capture still and video images and develop improved means to transmit, package and use them imaginatively."¹⁵

Until June 2004, military public affairs units and practitioners did not possess the capability to transmit video images of broadcast-quality in real time. Very small video image clips could be transmitted through the internet, however, larger video image packages had to be mailed through the postal system or delivered by courier. By the time these materials reached their destination they were of no news value. In the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom,

Third Army Public Affairs purchased suitcase video teleconferencing systems that could be connected to International Maritime Satellite (INMARSAT) telephone systems to transmit video images in near real time.¹⁶ The quality of the video image transmissions was very poor due to the limitation of the systems to transmit only 128 kilobits per second. However, they did prove useful in conducting live interviews with commanding generals in Iraq direct to the Pentagon Press Corps. This experience revealed a communications gap in military public affairs capability.

Over the past eighteen months, the Third Army Public Affairs staff has successfully applied lessons learned from Afghanistan and phase one of Iraqi Freedom to establish a unique, emerging capability to help bridge the military communications gap. This effort is making dramatic impact on its ability to get broadcast-quality video products to the American and coalition publics through commercial news organizations. This Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS) capability has dramatically increased the quantity and quality of news stories about operations in Southwest Asia being told in the local and regional news outlets all across the U.S. and in some foreign countries. Local and regional news agencies that do not have the funding to send correspondents or reporters to the war zone now have the ability to conduct live interviews with soldiers from their home towns who are currently serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait or Qatar.

A military distribution center, established at a commercial teleport in Atlanta, serves as the conduit for transmitting broadcast quality video from units in the CENTCOM AOR to local and regional media throughout the U.S. More importantly, this is a two-way system. Small local and regional news networks can conduct live interviews from their studios in the U.S. through the hub in Atlanta to soldiers from their local area serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Qatar. Any news organization can register for free and download any of the products from this service. News networks can arrange to pull down video files or a live signal by satellite link or through fiber networks free of charge.

The military provides a plethora of fresh news as well as video and still digital images daily from Southwest Asia that media can use freely in packaging their news stories. Or, the media can initiate live interviews through the system to create their own stories. A multitude of stories are released every day and published on military websites for media to take freely, but few are ever used in the national media. On the other hand, local and regional media are hungry for this information and increasingly use this service. The local and regional markets are interested because they can access stories about units, and interviews with soldiers, from their local area that are of great interest to their respective audiences. DVIDS enables Third Army to deliver stories and video products to interested news markets that national media does not have time to tell in daily news cycles, and would otherwise go untold.

DVIDS has already been used numerous times to facilitate White House, DoD and Army public communications requirements from Iraq and Afghanistan, but as yet there has been no effort at those levels to adopt this as a permanent strategic capability. Joint doctrine states that, "The Joint Forces Commander (JFC) must ensure that the Public Affairs (PA) infrastructure to support the joint mission is, to the maximum extent possible, compatible with current media technology."¹⁷ DVIDS enables the military to deliver industry-standard broadcast-quality products to national and international media in real time from anywhere on the globe.

Since DVIDS inception in June 2004 media have downloaded more than 72 thousand video files, conducted more than 1,500 interviews with soldiers in the combat zone, and completed more than 5,400 media requests through this system.¹⁸ These statistics are growing exponentially as more systems are purchased and distributed throughout the Central Command area of responsibility (AOR).

From the six original systems purchased initially, there are now 52 systems in use in six countries in Southwest Asia, or with units preparing to deploy to the region. The Army owns the predominance of the systems, but recently NAVCENT also purchased a system to use from its headquarters in Bahrain, and Marine units are using DVIDS in their respective sectors in Iraq.

Unfortunately these systems are only being used in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. Initially, this system was intended to serve domestic audiences; however, it has grown in capability to support our coalition partners with links to their home nations. It has also been used during humanitarian relief operations after earthquakes in Iran and Pakistan, as well as the Multi-national Bright Star exercise in Egypt. This system can and should be employed by all services world-wide to support communication objectives during the full spectrum of military operations, from humanitarian relief efforts to high intensity warfare.

This system is currently operated and maintained primarily with Operation Iraqi Freedom funding which could expire instantly if military supplemental funding dries up and the current contract expires. While key public affairs leaders in DoD, JFCOM and CENTCOM strongly advocate the benefits of this capability, little action is currently underway to resource it and incorporate it into the core capabilities of defense public affairs. In order to expand this capability to support global efforts of the joint public affairs community it must be entered into the capabilities acquisition process to be established and resourced as a program of record. DVIDS must be resourced with personnel to give the DoD 24/7 capability to operate proactively in the global information environment to counter the messages of extremists and terrorist groups in the world media.

The QDR Strategic Communication Roadmap identifies programmatic and budgetary implications of Strategic Communication initiatives and tasks the Army with maintaining DVIDS until the next generation program of record is developed.¹⁹ But it doesn't go so far as to specify who will take on responsibility for initiating actions to enter the capability requirement into the acquisition process. This should be assigned to Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) in order to ensure this capability is expanded to support all combatant commands.

In a parallel action to Third Army's DVIDS, Joint Forces Command has initiated efforts to establish a deployable Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE) to provide rapid response communication capability to augment Joint Warfighters in crisis or contingency operations

world-wide.²⁰ The JPASE has a wing that is deployable within 48 hours that can help Joint Force Commanders interface with the media and the public with a DVIDS transmitter tied into the DVIDS distribution hub. This will be a helpful augmentation package to expand capabilities of the combatant commands' regional public affairs staffs, but the Army already has Public Affairs Detachments (PAD) and Mobile Public Affairs Detachments (MPAD) for this very purpose. If properly equipped for interfacing with foreign and U.S. domestic media, and put on a rotational rapid deployment status, the Army public affairs units could easily fulfill this mission. The joint composition of the JPASE unit gives it a unique advantage of greater breadth of knowledge for dealing with the various services. However, deploying any of these units half way around the world to support a crisis situation would not be timely enough to meet the immediate needs of real time news reporting. It would be better to provide DVIDS systems to all combatant command organic public affairs staffs to establish an immediate response capability in-place in every forward region that can respond within hours rather than days. Then the JPASE or Army public affairs units could expand their operations within two or three days.

Consolidating and synergizing public affairs assets

In concert with the current round of Base Realignment and Closure plans there is an immediate opportunity to leverage several DoD Public Affairs resources and change the way military public affairs is structured. For example, the Army and Air Force Hometown News organization and the DVIDS capability are currently separate operations performing similar functions in two locations in the U.S. Significant efficiencies in dollars and personnel can be achieved by co-locating and combining the resources of these organizations. Considerable developments in technology provide the opportunity to merge these capabilities and capitalize on technical developments in the private communications industry. The Hometown News organization is still flying video teams to various locations, including Iraq and Afghanistan, to collect video greetings for distribution to U.S. news organizations during holiday periods. There are already public affairs units in these and many other countries that can perform this function

and transmit the video products via their DVIDS satellite transmitters to a central hub in the U.S. In just one holiday period, the DVIDS hub received and processed 6000 greetings in comparison to 300-400 acquired and processed by the Hometown News teams in the same period. The Army alone could achieve significant cost savings in resources and personnel by combining the expertise of the Hometown News video processes with the capabilities of the DVIDS hub. The Navy, Air Force and Marines could also reap tremendous benefit from joining this venture. DVIDS can serve all combatant commands, all services, and DoD by expediting the flow of accurate and timely information about the activities of U.S. joint forces to the public and internal audiences.

Additionally, the Army is working on creating a Soldiers Media Center (SMC) at Ft. Meade, Maryland to consolidate several PA assets from the Washington, D.C. area, improve synergy, and reduce overhead costs. DVIDS can serve as the backbone for SMC by providing established infrastructure and technical capability through the Crawford Communications teleport. Making DVIDS a Program of Record (POR) through the joint acquisition process will ensure continued funding for maintaining today's Visual Information (VI) capability and developing tomorrow's VI capability.

Leveraging a commercial teleport will avoid the expense of building a new military facility, and purchasing satellite systems and other equipment needed to receive and distribute video and print materials. The tremendous benefits of outsourcing this service and leveraging the spending power and technical investments of a private company could not be matched with the expense of military construction, purchasing equipment, and training service members to perform this mission. In the long term, DVIDS should be made a POR and all services should be encouraged to combine efforts to join and expand this venture to improve synchronization and integration of this vital capability in all plans and operations.

Non-traditional audiences and news venues

New public audiences are emerging through communications systems involving the internet or electronic messaging, creating new news audiences in non-traditional news venues.

The future leaders and decision makers of the world include a growing number of people who have grown up playing video games and clicking through multiple media presentations. The developing audiences in foreign nations have also found the internet and emerging technologies to be a window to news previously not available to them. In order to grab their attention it is necessary to develop ways to present news that engages and involves them.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said, "Insurgents around the world have learned to use this media-rich environment to further their goals, and to successfully combat them, the U.S. government needs to adapt and use the technology that has proven to be so powerful..." He goes further to say, "forces deployed to a theater of operation need to be experienced enough to engage the full range of media that the world uses." This will require an elevation in Internet operations, the establishment of 24-hour press operations centers, and training in other channels of communication," he added.

News groups and listserves are providing the information exchange that people went to the commercial news organizations for in the past. Access to foreign press sites, and alternative press are letting news foragers go beyond the local or national news franchise perspective on the news. The conventional model of a mass medium was a one-way flow of the news from the news organizations to the public audience. Things like weblogs are providing a different way to provide news selection and commentary. Bloggers invite the contributions of their readers, and facilitate conversation between the readers. The discussion generated about the news item is often of the most interest, and provides the best understanding of the news event, rather than the news item itself.

"Citizens are interested in participating and contributing to subjects that traditional news outlets ignore or do not often cover. Clyde Bentley, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, notes, "The main difference

between traditional journalism and citizen journalism is that traditional journalists are sent out to cover things they don't really care about; in other words, the next city council meeting isn't going to make or break their lives. But a citizen journalist is not out to cover something, but to share it. For them, they want to tell everybody about their passion.”²¹

Independent newspapers, magazines, websites, radio and TV are becoming more widely available and emerging news sources are building their own audiences worldwide. In the contemporary automated information environments people increasingly receive news and information through web sites, electronic mail, web logs (blogosphere), and personal digital assistants (podcast).

Podcasts are an easy way to download available remarks from government officials, daily press briefings and listen to them on a personal media player. Apple computers launched the first capability for consumers to download music, news and other entertainment to iPods for users to take with them on the go. Since the creation of this capability its menu has grown to include 22 primary categories and 56 sub categories, however, there is currently no military category among the iTunes options. The DoD could miss the opportunity to gain an edge in this emerging capability if it delays in establishing its position as the preeminent provider of military materials in this new media. This leaves great potential for another break in the communication gap identified in the QDR if the department is not proactive in capitalizing on this market.

Recently Google has announced its initiative to enter into this market and therefore create another potential audience for military patrons.

Google Inc. is upping the ante in the online video gold rush, allowing content owners to set their own prices in a bid to create a more flexible alternative to Apple Computer Inc.'s pioneering iTunes store.

Google's planned video expansion, announced Friday at the Consumer Electronics Show, already has lined up commitments to sell thousands of downloads, including recent television broadcasts of popular CBS shows and professional basketball games, as well as vintage episodes from series that went off the air decades ago. A launch date for the expansion has not been released.²²

As technology rapidly emerges, so does the potential for new non-traditional news markets that may dominate conventional systems as the next generation enters the working world and gains interest in the greater world.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is another easy way to get the news whenever it is updated even if not logged on to an internet news source. With this system, various governmental organizations provide continually updated headline feeds and deliver them directly to one's desktop news reader. One can install a news reader that displays RSS feeds from personally selected Web sites. Like an email program or a Web browser, the news reader serves as a kind of information portal, and provides a real-time interface to the selected feeds. Once the RSS reader is set up to access a news source, it continuously checks the source's RSS feeds for the latest headlines. A number of free and commercial news readers are available for download from the internet.

List Serve is another variation of automated news access. One can automatically receive via email full texts of selected government documents and publications that provide key official information.

In order to keep pace with communicating to these emerging audiences it is critical to adapt communication strategies and technologies to participate in these environments. It is also necessary to be able to accelerate responses to adversarial misinformation and disinformation to all potential audiences. Military public affairs programs have made piecemeal jabs into these technologies but have not made a broad effort to aggressively engage in these new areas aside from the plethora of websites for every unit and organization. Central Command public affairs has established a deliberate effort to engage in the blogosphere as an official organization, while some others have responded individually under official titles to correct misinformation in various web log forums.²³ DoD has done some analysis of trends in many of these internet based technologies, but has yet to formally enter into information dissemination by these non-traditional means.

Foreign Audiences

In the blurred transition to phase four of OIF the Organization for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was expected to take on the responsibility for communications with the local population. Military public affairs units worked to fill the gaps in various provinces to varying degrees of success, but ORHA did not begin actual communications to the local population for a full two months after arrival in Baghdad. In the meantime, neighboring countries began broadcasting and publishing conflicting information and agendas to fill this void. The military should be expected and equipped to fulfill communications needs for the safety and security of the local population until the security situation enables other systems to be emplaced or restored.

Public affairs plans and capabilities must include preparations and means to provide information to the local populace in foreign areas of operations at the earliest opportunity in warfighting or peacekeeping operations. This will require translators who are already embedded with the public affairs staff prior to initiation of hostilities. It will also require special equipment to set up printing operations, radio transmissions, and television production in the formats and language of the local population.

Translators are in short supply and competing demands for their critical services in intelligence, civil military operations, and other requirements in the battle space quickly absorb all available linguists. It must be recognized that in the global information environment, and battle of ideas, public affairs and information operations must have early allocation of linguist support. This requirement is not just for translation, but for understanding the culture and nuances of the indigenous population as themes and messages are initially developed. It is not sufficient for the linguist to just be able to translate the language for written and broadcast materials. It is critical that the linguist be from the region of operations so they can properly craft and translate messages that will resonate with the target audience without offending or alienating them.

Printing requirements include computers with software and/or keyboards that enable translation into the native language. Ample printing materials must be brought in at the earliest possibility to initiate and sustain printing requirements until services and supplies can be purchased on contract through the local civilian market and normal production can be resumed by new or existing commercial publications.

Similarly, radio and television broadcast capabilities must be planned and ready to implement immediately to inform local populations where to get assistance, encourage them to comply with rule of law, and cooperate with coalition military efforts to restore basic services and return control to civil authority. Part of the challenge for ORHA was moving about the country and setting up communication stations in a tenuous security environment in which ORHA was unable to provide its own security.

A team from the 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD), supporting the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul, worked with the civilian operator to restore the radio station and support the commander's communication with the surrounding population. This proved beneficial to the early success achieved in that region. However, Baghdad was a different story. U.S. efforts to stop Iraqi propaganda in the initial stages of combat operations collapsed the government-controlled public information system. The government communications facility was completely destroyed, and ORHA's replacement equipment would not arrive and be established for more than two months. This communication gap opened the door for opposition communications to undermine the coalition and interim authority.

Secretary Rumsfeld recently said, "Let there be no doubt, the longer it takes to put a strategic communication framework into place, the more we can be certain that the vacuum will be filled by the enemy and by news informers that most assuredly will not paint an accurate picture of what is actually taking place."²⁴

The current Table of Organization and Equipment for deployable public affairs units is not adequate to meet the capability requirements for interacting with foreign audiences. It is

evident from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that military PA units must possess the ability, equipment and translators, to inform indigenous audiences in their respective areas of operations. The lessons learned and experiences of PA assets in active theaters of operations, most of which are Army units, must drive doctrine, organization, training, materiel, logistics, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) planning. The Army Public Affairs Center should review the mission and equipment for deployable public affairs units and initiate actions to make appropriate changes in DOTMLPF as necessary to fill this gap.

While there are signs of progress, the DoD efforts in strategic communication currently lack adequate strategic direction, and interagency coordination. The accomplishment of military objectives is at great risk, as well as the potential for squandering national resources in costly military campaigns without a coherent communications strategy. There must be a top-down strategy from the President to synchronize efforts of diplomacy and public information with activities of various other elements of national power to support foreign policy objectives. The information campaign must be a continuous process in peacetime, during military campaigns, and throughout stability or peacekeeping operations.

"We are fighting a battle where the survival of our free way of life is at stake and the center of gravity of that struggle is not simply on the battlefield overseas; it's a test of wills, and it will be won or lost with our publics, and with the publics of other nations," Secretary Rumsfeld said. "We'll need to do all we can to attract supporters to our efforts and to correct the lies that are being told, which so damage our country, and which are repeated and repeated and repeated."²⁵

The urgency of the need for a proactive and responsive communications strategy warrants accelerated DoD actions to synchronize efforts, engage in non-traditional media, and develop creative solutions for improving strategic communications. In combination with making the DVIDS service a DoD-wide capability, there is an immediate opportunity to leverage several Public Affairs resources and change the way military public affairs is structured to gain synergy from combining the various capabilities.

Strategic communications is a critical enabler for the employment of the national elements of power to achieve political objectives. It is past due time to transform DoD strategic communication in order to effectively support military objectives through communications strategies. Diplomatic, economic, and military actions reinforced by strategic communication are necessary to advance national policy objectives: "No single contributor is preeminent. All are required in a synchronized and coherent manner."²⁶

Endnotes

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¹⁸ LTC William Beckman, Director of the Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System hub, Atlanta, Georgia, e-mail message to author, weekly statistics, 3 Mar 2006.

¹⁹ Thorpe, Draft QDR Execution Roadmap, p. 2.

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